

An Ethnographic Approach to Social Stratification: Prestige in a Central Italian Community¹

SYDEL F. SILVERMAN

Queens College, City University of New York

The ethnographic strategy that works toward the formulation of a culture's rules for perceiving the objective world and for making culturally acceptable decisions was applied to the system of social stratification in a community in Central Italy. In order to determine the native categories by which persons are hierarchically differentiated, the criteria that define these categories, and the indicators by which criteria are judged to have been met, a field method was devised requiring informants to demonstrate the principles of their system. Some of the problems and potentialities of the approach are illustrated by the results obtained in Colleverde.

INTRODUCTION

AS ANTHROPOLOGISTS' interest in complex societies increases, it becomes essential to develop empirical procedures for discovering the principles of stratification in different cultures. The problem is one of ethnographic description, and it cannot be solved simply by borrowing the methods of sociology, which do not easily lend themselves to revealing the dimensions of newly encountered systems. I intend here to explore a field method for delineating one aspect of stratification—to set forth the point of view underlying the method and to illustrate its potentialities by the results I obtained with it in a community in Central Italy.

The aspect of social stratification with which I am concerned is the inequality among members of a society in terms of "prestige"—that is, differential evaluations by the society and differential capacities to claim deference, as reflected in patterns of initiation of action (Chapple and Coon 1942:439) and various ritualistic forms. I prefer the term "stratification" to "ranking" because prestige differences in the community I studied assume the form of discrete strata rather than a continuum of ranked positions. The definitions of these terms, which will be detailed more fully below, emerged largely from the application of the method in the field. While what I attempt to describe is close to what some consider "social class," from other points of view "prestige," as used here, represents only one dimension of social class or else a variable more or less correlated with it. My approach, moreover, aims to identify not the determinants of stratification, but rather the criteria for classification within determined systems.

The strategy followed here builds on the efforts of the so-called "new ethnography" (or "ethnoscience," Sturtevant's rather misleading term [1964]) to discover the principles by which the bearers of particular cultures organize their universe and respond to it in culturally appropriate ways. Although such an aim is in itself hardly new, this movement is distinctive in its emphasis upon cognition, its view of culture as a code in the minds of people, and its explicit concern with methodological procedures for delineating that code. This ap-

proach looks at culture as a system of implicit rules, learned and shared by the members of a society and used by them in perceiving the objective world (selecting certain things as significant and ignoring other things as insignificant) and in making culturally acceptable decisions about their own behavior. The anthropologist's task is to learn the code by examining the natives' application of its rules.

In this view, the "emic" concept of linguistics is extended to cultural behavior in general. Thus far, this has been done most successfully with cultural categories that are represented by discrete terms. As Goodenough has put it, just as the identification of a phoneme consists of determining the acoustical criteria that are significant in differentiating phonetically similar but nonidentical forms, so a description of the category "cousin" is a matter of determining the criteria people have in mind when they judge whether two persons are "cousins" (1956:195). However, the same point of view and the same standards of ethnographic description may be applied to areas of culture other than those represented by clear-cut terminological systems. Frake's explorations in the spheres of ecology and religious behavior are encouraging demonstrations that this can be done (1962; 1964a).

In a particular culture it may be found that "deference" is a significant dimension of behavior and that "prestige" differences separate people into several ranks; yet the significant differentiations may not be represented by a set of specific terms, and the culturally significant categories may not be named categories. The problem becomes one of formulating the rules governing "deference" behavior, that is, of discovering everything one needs to know in order to make the judgments and perform the acts that would be considered appropriate by a native in situations where "deference" is relevant. A crucial part of this problem is to determine the features of other persons that people attend to and how they evaluate these features in deciding whether to show deference, to expect deference, or neither. One asks: What do I have to know about x in order to identify his prestige rank? What do I have to know about x and y in order to judge their relative rank? What are the criteria that enable a person knowledgeable in the culture to make these decisions? There are innumerable discriminable differences between x and y , but only certain ones are relevant. The ethnographer's task is to formulate and test various hypotheses in order to find the correct criteria.

The aim of such a description is not simply a statement of the number of ranks, the labels attached to each, and the placement of each person in the community in one rank or another. It is, rather, the discovery of the principles used by the culture in differentiating persons. At issue is the distinction that Dell Hymes makes between a "sorting" and an "assignment of semantic features to the dimensions of the sorting" (1964:117). A stratification system might be described as a number of pigeonholes, and one might be able to obtain a high degree of consensus on the categorization of people into the pigeonholes; but unless one has determined the criteria used in classifying persons, the sorting remains a semantic mystery.

To determine the semantic features of any stratification system, two kinds of data are necessary. First, the ethnographer acts as a more or less active observer of the stream of naturally occurring cultural events. In addition, "prestige" rules must to a large extent be derived by talking about them with informants, for the discriminations leading up to behavior involving "prestige" cannot be directly observed. However, the ethnographer cannot take as the rules whatever the informants cite. Rather, he must ask his informants to make decisions requiring them to put the rules into effect. Although people may be vague about what social stratification is and unable to describe the prestige system of their community or even their own categories for classifying people,² they do know how to act appropriately within the system and to use the rules of the system correctly. The informants' definitions, supplied for the ethnographer's benefit, may be of little value, but questions and problems may be put to them that reveal the rules indirectly.

The fundamental problem is to devise procedures for tapping the native criteria and the rules of their application. It is on the development of such procedures that the future of the "new ethnography" depends. The theory of this movement is attractive. For example, a recent issue of the *AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST* included two analyses of ethnographic data phrased in terms of cognition, codes, and cultural rules (Foster 1965; Vogt 1965). But neither of these articles said how the formulations of the code (the analytic principles of "limited good," "replication," etc.) were arrived at. Since a statement of cultural rules is only as good as the means by which it was constructed, the critical issue is method. This paper attempts to tackle the issue by examining a procedure used in building up a model of the code in one facet of the culture of an Umbrian community.

THE COMMUNITY

Colleverde (a pseudonym) is located near the geographical center of Italy, about 150 kilometers north of Rome, in the province of Perugia. In 1960 a population of approximately 1,900 lived in 465 households in Colleverde parish, the unit taken as the community for study. Some 300 people inhabit the hilltop village that is the administrative and social center of the community. These villagers are with few exceptions nonagriculturalists; they include landowners and administrators of agricultural properties, professionals, clerks, merchants, artisans, and laborers. Aside from the inhabitants of two small hamlets, the remainder of the population lives on scattered farmsteads on the slopes around the village and in the plain along the banks of the Tiber.

The economic basis of the community is agriculture, with commerce, artisan manufacturing, and services almost entirely limited to local functions. The local products, which provide both subsistence (for the peasants and small-scale landlords) and cash income, include wheat, olives, wine grapes, maize, a variety of minor crops (used for food, forage, and renewal of the land), meat calves (a post-World War II industry, replacing the work oxen of former years), pigs, some sheep, barnyard fowl, and a small quantity of industrial crops—

tobacco, sugar beet, and tomato—which are cultivated in the irrigated tracts of the plain. The wheat in surplus of subsistence needs, the calves, and the industrial crops constitute the primary market products.

Typically, the entire range of these crops and animals is produced on self-contained family farms. Although some of these farms are worked by owner-cultivators, the most common form of land tenure (comprising over two-thirds of the cultivable land area) is the *mezzadria* system of share-farming. Under this system, a contract—with a minimum duration of one year, but generally persisting for several years or even decades—is entered into between a landowner, who furnishes an equipped farm and advances all working capital, and a peasant family, which provides labor and minor equipment. All other expenses are divided half and half, and subsistence produce and the income from market sales are divided 53–47 in favor of the peasant (until 1948 the division of income was 50–50). Traditionally, the relationship between landowner and *mezzadro* followed a highly personalized patron-client pattern (Silverman 1965). In the Colleverde of today, however, this traditional relationship is becoming rare, as the landowning group is itself changing. While a century ago almost all of the community's land was held by a few local families, today the *mezzadria* land alone is distributed among over 100 owners, with a median holding of about ten hectares; even the four major landlords, all absentee owners, have relatively modest properties of approximately 100 hectares each.

The form of family organization generally considered as ideal in Colleverde is the patrilocal extended family; it is found in about half the households of the countryside and about a third of the community as a whole. The more predominant form of organization is the nuclear family. Both kinship ties beyond the household and godparenthood relationships are of minor functional significance here, but neighborhood circles are important for mutual assistance. Political conflicts in the community reflect long-standing internal divisions, roughly following economic lines. Formal authority is divided between elected local officials, who are members of the Leftist coalition and mainly peasants, and an appointed bureaucracy delegated from the central government.

THE METHOD

Field work in Colleverde was carried out through 12 consecutive months. During the early months, through the use of traditional ethnographic techniques (participant-observation, informal questioning, structured interviewing of key informants, etc.) it became evident that the Colleverdesi showed deference to each other according to a generally agreed-upon scale of prestige. A tentative view of this scale was formulated that was essentially an occupational hierarchy; in the course of subsequent observation, it became necessary to modify this one-dimensional hierarchy by other factors (such as nature of the relationship to the land, place of residence, and "well-bred" behavior). However, discrepancies continued to arise between the predicted rank of particular persons and actual deference behavior, and these discrepancies could be ac-

counted for only by a multiplication of "modifying factors." My model seemed to be at once too complex to approximate the rules actually followed in the assignment of rank and too simple to accommodate all significant distinctions.

In an effort to develop a more satisfactory model, I turned to the view of ethnography pointed to in some of the pioneering studies in componential analysis and related work (e.g., Conklin 1955; Goodenough 1956; Goodenough 1957), a view that was part of my theoretical orientation when I went into the field. Using this approach in a series of interviews with key informants, I devised the sorting method described below.

The first informant was Rinaldo, a 65-year-old man who had worked closely with me on many aspects of the field work. A retired public official and member of a prominent local landowning family, he was invaluable for his deep interest in the history and distinctive identity of Colleverde and his sensitivity to the scientific purpose of the ethnographic work. Subsequently, the interview series was repeated with two other men—Gianni, a 43-year-old school teacher, and Alberto, a 54-year-old artisan—and parts of the procedure were applied with a 50-year-old ex-peasant woman. All were lifetime residents of the community and from families that had been in Colleverde for many generations.³ All had participated previously in various phases of the field work. They do not constitute a random sample of the population, for they were deliberately selected for their qualities as informants: they had to be capable of rendering fairly objective evaluations of persons and of performing a rather complex sorting task (thus, literacy was for practical purposes desirable).

A preliminary interview with each informant was conducted to establish the relevant cultural domain and to clarify what questions to ask.⁴ At first, I assumed only that persons are differentiated by some general consensus according to "higher" and "lower." Each informant was presented with a number of cards naming various members of the community and was asked to try to sort them out as "higher" and "lower." No indication was given of the dimensions of hierarchy that I wanted, for my explicit aim was to permit the informant to establish the terms in which "higher" and "lower" are meaningful to him. In addition, I asked the specific meanings of a number of terms (e.g., *signore*, *contadino*) that in popular usage seemed related to "high-low" differentiation.

Each informant indicated that there are various possible ways of distinguishing persons as "higher" and "lower" (such as financial position and values attached to occupations). However, in each case *rispetto* was soon mentioned. This concept, whose meaning will be discussed in the following section, seemed satisfying to the informants and they readily returned to it. The preliminary interviews revealed that to behave appropriately in Colleverde one must know a set of rules for judging the relative *rispetto* due different persons. A strategic question emerged, asked implicitly by Colleverdesi in their everyday behavior and potent for eliciting relevant information if asked by the ethnographer: "If A and B meet on the street, will A feel that B owes him *rispetto*, that he owes *rispetto* to B, or that neither owes *rispetto* to the other?" The further question,

"Why?" though it cannot always be asked directly, ought then to reveal the distinctions recognized in judging *rispetto* and ultimately a more or less complete statement of the rules for making these judgments.

In addition to suggesting the relevant questions to be put to informants, the preliminary interviews yielded other information that affected the way in which the sorting task was set up. First, it became evident that *rispetto* regulates relations only outside the household; it is adjudged for the family group as a whole and (with a few exceptions) at a common level for all members. The unit taken in subsequent interviews, therefore, was the family (household) rather than the individual. It was also determined that in Colleverde assessments of the level of *rispetto* correspond to a discrete, small number of categories, rather than to a continuum of graded ranks or a very large number of levels. Therefore, informants could be asked to sort families "into groups." Moreover, since these categories are correlated with objective attributes, it seemed possible to identify these attributes by referring to a sufficiently large and representative part of the population, after which the level of others who share these attributes could be predicted.

The sorting task was carried out in two two-hour interviews with each informant. The informant was given 175 cards, one for each family of the village and for a selected sample of the countryside families. He was asked to sort all the cards into groups, as many or as few as he wished, according to the level of *rispetto*. It should be noted that the special task I set did not force the informant to behave in ways that do not occur in natural events; rather, it was a stimulus for the informant to simulate his normal behavior, to make the same judgments as those required of members of this community in everyday situations.

The informant proceeded with the sorting by comparing pairs of cards, using as pairs as many different combinations as possible. The cards were tentatively assigned to groups, group boundaries being drawn wherever the difference within pairs drawn from two adjacent groups was greater than any difference within pairs drawn from a single group. The placing of a particular family actually depended on a number of different judgments of relative *rispetto*: A in relation to any randomly selected B (whether A considers B higher or lower, and whether B considers A higher or lower); A in relation to C, a family assigned to the higher of two groups between which the informant was hesitating; A in relation to D, a family assigned to the lower group; how the "community in general" judge A as compared to B, C, and D. Ideally, all the different possibilities ought to be determined; in fact, more than one or two were resorted to only when a sorting was difficult.

Many rearrangements were made, and the task was continued until the informant felt satisfied that the groups he produced were internally uniform and differentiated from each other. None of the informants had any clear over-all idea of the stratification picture as a whole when he began the sorting, and some expressed surprise that at the end of the task they had, in fact, built up an acceptable picture of the whole system. No criteria were suggested to the in-

formants in making their judgments, and at the beginning they did not have in mind any explicit criteria that they intended to use. As they made their judgments, they weighed various considerations: how much schooling does this one have? who were their ancestors? how long have they lived in the village? how cultured is their behavior? and so on. Such questions provided the strategic data, for they indicate the distinctions that are of significance in the system. In general, after the informants made several specific judgments, they tended to have in mind a number of major categories to which they assigned persons on the basis of various attributes. From their statements (both volunteered and elicited) as they made these decisions, it was eventually possible to draw up hypotheses about the criteria of membership in these categories and about the attributes of persons that indicate whether these criteria are met.

When the informant was satisfied with his sorting, he was asked about the size of the differences between groups: between which two groups is there the greatest gap? the second greatest? and so on. He was then asked to try to explain the bases on which he made the sorting, that is, to characterize each group and explain its uniformity or internal variation. Finally, a number of questions were explored about the placement of hypothetical persons and about the possible ways in which one could move from one category to another.

From these data a model of the prestige stratification system was formulated. This was done by examining all the separate judgments in which a specific pair of adjacent categories was contrasted. It was found that all the specific contrasts between a pair of categories could be reduced to one (supposedly) underlying contrast.⁵ Major categories (A, B, and C) and subcategories (A-1, A-2, C-1, C-2, and C-3) could be distinguished from the judgments about the sizes of the gaps. All informants agreed that the largest gap was that between categories B and C, and all considered the gap between A and B almost as great. Subcategories A-1 and A-2 were recognized by all, although the gap between them was small; and two of the three primary informants saw two minor gaps within category C.

This model primarily expresses points of agreement among the informants. However, the achieved sortings of the three were not identical. There were discrepancies in the number of groups (Rinaldo recognized six groups, Gianni four groups, and Alberto seven groups) and in the points at which groups were cut off one from another, although there was high agreement on the relative rank of most persons. These discrepancies are greatly reduced if one examines the categorical criteria used by the different informants (rather than merely the groups they produced) and if one compares their placement of specific "highly visible" persons and their statements on the size of gaps. Thus, the fourth group of Gianni corresponds to the three lowest groups of Rinaldo and Alberto; Gianni recognized the same distinctions, but considered them too minor to call for any subdivision of the category. Similarly, Alberto, himself a member of Rinaldo's and Gianni's third group, created an additional category by drawing a distinction between a higher and lower level within this group (assigning himself to the higher), although he considered this gap the smallest of all.

The sorting method permitted the formulation of a model to serve as a working hypothesis, to be checked in subsequent phases of the field work through observation of actual behavior, volunteered statements, and informal questioning. This later work substantially supported the hypothesized model; it also modified and elaborated it somewhat and clarified some apparent inconsistencies. In the field work as a whole, the formal technique was considered an aid in the construction of hypotheses, whose verification had to come from traditional ethnographic methods.

A MODEL OF PRESTIGE STRATIFICATION IN COLLEVERDE

Early in the interviews *rispetto* emerged as the key concept used in differentiating persons hierarchically. All informants volunteered it and returned to it repeatedly. For example:

These two, Vittorio and Oliviero, are considered almost equal. Just that Vittorio is a very different type, a bit strange. He has had many trades, never at peace, going from one place to another. But he is *rispettato* as much as the other. . . . Lorenzo—yes, he is *rispettato*. Perhaps even more than they. . . . Maria—this is a maid; they show her less *rispetto*.

In Colleverdese culture, *rispetto* can best be understood as a habitual response-readiness with which one approaches another member of the society. According to the particular situation in which the approach occurs, *rispetto* requires certain rituals of behavior; it dictates the terms of address and the choice of second-person pronouns; it determines the order of speech, the tone of voice, and various other modifications of behavior. In the terms of Chapple and Coon, owing *rispetto* is an attitude of recognition of the other person's right to initiate action.⁶

The order of *rispetto* (in the most general sense of the term) between two or more persons is determined by a number of factors: age, kin relationships (insofar as they assign persons to different generational categories), temporary legitimate authority (e.g., an employer or a *carabiniere* in uniform), and even situational power (e.g., an enemy soldier with a gun). Another factor cuts across all of these, however, endowing persons with differential rights to *rispetto* when these factors are kept constant—as when two persons are of the same general age status and unrelated, and neither possesses temporary legitimate or illegitimate power over the other. It is this specific kind of *rispetto*, a permanent attribute apart from age, sex, or kinship status, that the informants referred to. It acts as an accompaniment to or modifier of behavior in interaction between any two persons who are not members of the same household. Its strength as a determinant of behavior is the greater to the extent that (1) the other factors of *rispetto* are absent, and (2) the interacting persons are not bound by equalizing ties. Thus, it will have a greater influence on the interaction of unrelated persons than of those who are classified as *zio* (uncle) and *nipote* (nephew). It will be more important between persons who know each other merely as *compaesani* (members of the same community) than between neighbors (for the neighborhood is an equalizing tie), and it will more strongly influence behavior during casual discussions at the local café than during a community religious procession (which tends to equalize co-participants).

While *rispetto* is the over-all attitude toward another person (a judgment of his right to receive deference), the concept *considerazione* refers to the actual, objective manifestations of deference. *Considerazione* may occur apart from *rispetto*, as when one finds it politic to show more deference to a person than is actually appropriate. For example, one informant pointed out that the local chief of the *carabinieri* evokes more *considerazione* than anyone, though his claim to *rispetto* is not great. Both these concepts are clearly distinguished from *stima*, the evaluation of an individual's personal worth. The difference between *rispetto* and *stima* was repeatedly emphasized by informants.

Roberto and his brothers have *rispetto*, as much as any of the others in the first rank. But he is a rascal. Their father stole from everybody. People look out for them because they are dangerous. But they *rispettare* them. . . . For a man who is dishonest and rich, they show *rispetto*, while one who isn't rich but is completely good doesn't get as much as that other. A woman who is good but poor, so so. A woman who isn't good but has something is *rispettata*. That's how it is around here. . . . Dario—he is *rispettato* as much as these others, even though he drinks too much. . . . Giorgio—he is *rispettato*, as a landowner, as a bank clerk. He has committed I don't know what kind of crime in the bank, but *rispetto* they show him all the same.

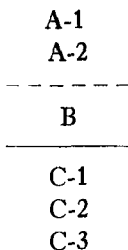
It was also made clear by informants that *rispetto* is not the same as and does not necessarily correspond to "intimacy," or association. Informants consistently asked whether I was interested in *lo stato sociale di per se, com'è* (the actual social standing of a person) or the associational groupings that people form because of personal feelings toward each other. Many examples were given of pairs of persons who associate with each other regularly and closely; a number of these referred to friendships between people of nonadjacent ranks. These statements were later verified by observation.⁷

The concept of *rispetto* was arrived at by induction rather than by definition, and its usage here corresponds to its range of application within Colleverde culture. At the same time, its meaning approximates the concept of "prestige" as used by some American sociologists. Thus, Kahl defines "personal prestige" by stating:

An individual has high prestige when his neighbors, in general, have an attitude of respect toward him. Another word that is often used for this attitude is deference, or the granting of social honor. Prestige is a sentiment in the minds of men, although they do not always know that it is there [1957:8].

Kahl also makes a distinction between "prestige" and "esteem" similar to the *rispetto/stima* contrast in Colleverde: ". . . the behavior of a man in a given role leads to *esteem* in the eyes of others, but the importance of the role itself is the source of his *prestige*" (1957:20). In view of this similarity, it would seem appropriate to translate *rispetto* as "prestige."

The results of the formal sorting method and of the participant-observation that followed suggest that the system of prestige stratification in Colleverde can best be viewed in terms of three major categories, with six distinguishable groups in all. Each is defined by certain criteria of membership that can be stated as contrasts between adjacent groups of the same dimension. The categories and subcategories may be schematized as follows:



The most important line of cleavage (symbolized by the solid line), the gap between AB and C, is the contrast of village and countryside. There are several linguistic correlates of this contrast, a pervasive distinction of social life in Colleverde: *paese/campagna* (village/countryside), *paesano/contadino* (villager/peasant), *persone di dentro/persone di fuori* (people of inside/people of outside), and many others. Legitimate association with either the village or the countryside determines a family's position. "Association" suggests that it is not the fact of residence that is crucial but the sphere of social interaction. The qualification "legitimate" refers to the community's recognition of where one "belongs," which is based upon the length of time that a family has been dissociated from working the land. Thus, while there are village artisans both in B and in C-1, those of B have been resident in the *paese* for generations and "belong" there, whereas C-1 families have taken on village ways only in their own lifetime or the generation before. To illustrate, the following are comments made about nonagricultural residents of the village who were placed in C-1:

These are workers who have come from the *campagna* a short time ago, just after the war. It's only recently that they've come inside. If not for that, they are *contadini*. . . . You understand, here, as yet, the people don't give them much *rispetto*. . . . After a while, with time, the sons may acquire much more *rispetto*.

These are almost all *excontadini*. . . . These are mostly from *contadino* families, even if today they are artisans. . . . Gino—he owns a little land, but still he's considered the same as a *contadino*. . . . Monelli—this is a good family, in behavior and everything, but still they are from the *campagna*, even if it has been many years now that they've been in the village. . . . Enrico—he is an artisan. You might ask why I don't put him with the other artisans here [in B], but no. Because in Colleverde he isn't considered like, for instance, Alberto, even though they are both artisans, this one a shoemaker, that one a carpenter. Enrico is of another background. In men like that, nothing has changed. . . . In the idea of the people here, a *contadino* is still considered a *contadino*, even if he does different work. . . . For these *contadini*, to come into the village was just a matter of a change of trade. It didn't bring about any *incivilimento* [civilizing].

On the other hand, these statements refer to families placed in B:

The Ciani, though *contadini* originally, are an old and respected family in the village. . . . The Pianelli, though they were *contadini*, are a very respected family. They were always part of the community. They were elected as representatives of the people. . . . I must put them ahead of the *contadini*.

The concept of fully "belonging" in the village does not necessitate residence there, for certain families whose occupations require that they reside in the *campagna* but who have long been detached from working the land are assigned

to B or even A. For persons whose assignment to B rather than to C-1 may not be obvious—for example, those of known *campagna* background who live in the *paese* and participate to some extent in its life—association with the AB side of the contrast may be indicated by various symbols: a family name that is “old and considered as part of the village”; behavior and mentality that no longer smack of the *contadino*; a skill guaranteeing that one will never have to return to being a peasant; or the authority to give orders to some one else in a functionally specific role (as the bricklayer who employs workmen, the town-hall clerk or the *carabiniere* whose job gives him limited authority, or the minor landowner who has a peasant or two), for “*campagna*” implies those who take orders and rarely give them.

The gap setting off category A from BC is the distinction between a select group and *il popolo* (the common people). The former group includes persons who command a high level of personal influence and informal authority in the community as a whole, as manifested in explicit rituals of deference, among other things.

In the eyes of the people, they are a category higher than the others, in the *rispetto* due them. . . . Whoever meets any of them on the street will not fail to greet them. . . . They form a group apart.

Il popolo is divided between *il popolo di dentro* (the common people inside the walls—B) and *il popolo di fuori* (the common people of outside—C). With few exceptions the persons assigned to A are considered *signori*. However, this label was rarely volunteered by informants in categorizing persons, perhaps because the term has a number of meanings in common usage, including political and explicitly derogatory references. Nevertheless, when asked to identify the *signori*, the informants considered the range of the term coextensive with category A, and there was little discrepancy in different persons' statements about who is and who is not a *signore*. In fact, forms of interaction and linguistic usages clearly distinguish the group. Thus, the *signori* are addressed by non-intimates as “Sor Giovanni” and “Sora Rosa” or simply “Signora,” rather than as “Giovanni” and “Rosa,” and the *voi* rather than the *tu* form is used.

The difference between A-1 and A-2 is the distinction between commanding a true position of influence, backed up by “legitimacy” (A-1), and making a reasonably successful but unjustified claim to such a position (A-2). “Legitimacy” may be obtained in either of two ways: it may be inherited (by bearing—with some distinction of one's own—the name of a historically *signorile* family), or else acquired by higher education. In most instances, the influence of A-1 is of the acquired variety—the professionals necessarily have advanced degrees, and the title of *dottore* (a university graduate) alone bestows A-1 status. (That higher education is a limiting factor is evident from the fact that an agricultural estate manager who is commonly regarded as bearing all the traces of his peasant ancestry is unanimously recognized as a *signore* of first rank merely by virtue of being a “doctor” of agrarian technology.) Placement in A-1 is also appropriate for nonprofessionals who are descended from one of

the half dozen or so traditional local landowning families, provided the person has to some extent maintained the family position through economic success and/or education.

Mortini Osvaldo—I put him in the first category. He comes from a family with the blood of bishops and cardinals. They are in an excellent economic position. . . . It is a family surrounded by consideration. I remember as a boy, at the end of vacation, the evening before leaving for school, I went to the Mortini family to greet them. It was an act of deference one performed for the four or five best families. . . . Now, Osvaldo himself holds a position of importance, one that is entrusted only to very capable men.

It is often said that persons of A-1 are entitled to their prestige because they are (or should be) “*signori* in mentality and behavior,” for this kind of *signorilità* is believed to be attainable only by the upbringing characteristic of the distinguished families or by advanced schooling. In contrast, A-2 consists primarily of the “*signori* of financial means” (the five or six most prosperous landowners), whose status is not validated either by distinguished ancestry or by education. Other people of A-2, who have some reasonable but not unquestionable claim to *signorile* status, are the near-professionals (white-collar workers in positions of some responsibility) and the nonprosperous and little-educated descendants of the traditional landowning families.

Marina is descended from the leading family of this area. . . . If I had to judge by the family name, I’d put her here [A-1], but I must put her here [A-2]. . . . This woman, of an ancient and illustrious—also wealthy—family, today no longer has anything. She has had only a modest education and her trade also shows [her decline].

As was indicated above, one of the informants drew a distinction between two subdivisions of category B, the significant factors being the length of time since the family had moved from the countryside into the village and the extent to which it is accepted by the core of the *paese* group historically “of the inside.”

Category C is marked by *contadino* origin and identification. The distinction between C-1 and the two lower subcategories is in the shedding of the most obvious characteristics of peasant life: occupation and/or residence.

These [C-1] are people of *contadino* origin who have been in the village for some time. Their work is more civilized than a *contadino*’s. They are a little *paesato* [i.e., they have acquired some village traits].

It should be borne in mind that in Colleverde, “*contadino*” connotes *mezzadro*, although it denotes anyone who works the soil. (In its most general meaning the term “*contadino*” is extended, with derogatory intention, to everyone identified with the *campagna*.) Thus, while the most clear-cut way of becoming dissociated from the *contadino* is through acquiring a nonagricultural occupation, it is also possible to do this (with somewhat less likelihood of success) through a work status clearly not that of the *mezzadro*—as a salaried agricultural laborer (paid in money and employed on a regular basis), an agricultural foreman, or a peasant proprietor with at least enough land to support the household. In all cases in which *mezzadro* occupation or country residence has been shed—but not both (as with persons who have moved into the *paese*

without entirely abandoning agricultural work)—membership in C-1 rather than C-2 is determined by a judgment that the family has taken on village “ways,” despite the fact that they are indelibly identified as *excontadini*. The most important element in this judgment is regular participation in the public life of the village (for example, congregating in the cafés and piazzas on other than holidays and special occasions).

The contrast between C-2 and C-3 is the distinction between the self-respecting peasant and the *bifolco*, the peasant who is oppressed or mistreated, lives “like a beast,” and has no prospect of improving his position.

Take the Bernardi and the Santi, for instance [in C-2]. These are ancient families of Colleverde. It is a hundred years that they are on the same farm. It is almost as if they are of the village. They are very good families, genteel, perhaps with a little money. . . . The greater part of these others [C-3] are poor. Until just now they were really the slaves of the landowners. . . . These [C-2] want everything. If they don't like something, they leave the *padrone*. . . . Most of them have money. . . . They come to the village a lot to amuse themselves. They have raised themselves in everything. They all have a motor scooter, and some even have an automobile.

Assignment to C-2 rather than C-3 may be made on a variety of bases: ownership of some land of one's own, belonging to a family line with a long history in the community as “respectable” people, or awareness of and experience in the world outside the community (as indicated by an active political role, for example). In C-3 are the lowly, backward peasants: the ignorant *mezzadri*, the workers hired by peasants (the term “*garzone*,” referring to the extra hand taken into a *mezzadro*'s household, is extended to include the most down-trodden peasants), and agriculturalists who work as casual laborers or who have come into the community only recently.

If this description is substantially correct, it is apparent that the criteria delimiting the various recognized categories differ according to the particular categories or subcategories being contrasted. I think it would be a misstatement of the cultural rules simply to apply a number of different factors (such as education, occupation, residence, etc.) uniformly throughout the system and calculate individuals' positions by arithmetical combinations of these factors.⁸ This would be true even if the factors used were limited to those with specific relevance in this community. That the differences between categories cannot be accounted for merely by applying the same factors in a graded scale over the whole system is underlined by the responses to questions on how one could move from one level to another (and by evidence on how persons *have* moved). At each level, some particular change can be decisive, with all other factors held constant. The move from C-3 to C-2 is a matter of acquiring sophistication. Moving from C-2 to C-1 can be achieved by detachment from agricultural work. One moves from C-1 to B “with time” (by the process of *incivilimento*, becoming integrated into and incorporating the patterns of village life). Mobility into category A is accomplished by education; university education guarantees a move into A-1, while a lower level of education combined with success in obtaining a semiprofessional position ensures at least A-2

assignment. It is suggested that in each case the critical factor accounting for mobility from one level to another is a clue to the criteria that define a category, differentiating it from the adjacent ones.

In sum, the first requirement of a description of the prestige stratification system of Colleverde is a statement of the *criteria* of different categories—what one must have or be in order to be a member of that category. However, the informants in the test situation, and presumably all Colleverdesi in their daily behavior, judge whether or not the criteria have been met—in the case of any particular person—by attending to a number of *indicators*. For example, in making the decision as to whether a particular *mezzadro* belongs to the *bifolchi* of C-3 or to the higher rank of C-2, the informant would weigh the indicators of family name, behavior and attitudes, financial position, extent of schooling, and so on. The indicators, then, are the significant items of information called upon in making judgments, while the criteria are the defining features of categories.

The most important indicators in the Colleverde system are the following, given in order of the frequency with which they were mentioned by informants:

1. The level of *civiltà*. This concept, which can best be translated as “a civilized way of life,” involves *educazione* (not formal education, but genteel behavior), personal qualities such as courtesy and generosity, and above all conformity to a number of specifically urban patterns: fashionable clothing, nonrustic habitation, refined manners, nondialectal speech, participation in the café-and-piazza social life, and access (direct or indirect) to larger centers.

2. Occupation. Three dimensions are relevant: whether the occupation involves working the land, the amount of formal education or training it requires, and superordination or subordination to other persons and the position of the persons to whom one is superordinate or subordinate. (With reference to the third point, it is of interest that a crucial distinction given between government employees in A-2 and those in B is that the former originate orders at the local level, while those in B only execute the orders of others. At the very bottom of the system are the *garzoni*, who not only give orders to no one but take orders from the *mezzadri*, who in turn take orders from almost everyone else.)

3. *Istruzione*, the level of formal schooling attained.

4. Family name: the category with which the family has historically been associated and the length of time the family has been in Colleverde.

5. Financial position. (The limited importance of this indicator is suggested by the fact that the wealthiest family in the community was assigned only to B. Their money, which was made in various commercial ventures during and after World War II, is being invested in part in *mezzadria* farms, and the wife uses some of the wealth in being a benevolent patroness to many individuals and to the community in general. However, even this translation of new wealth into traditional patterns is not sufficient to move the family into A-2. The families of A-2 who are the “*signori* of money,” it should be noted, have all owned their land for at least one generation—but rarely more

than two; longer ownership would tend to meet the A-1 criterion of "legitimacy by ancestry.")

6. Provenience from Colleverde. In the absence of any conclusive evidence of rank, coming from outside the community suggests a questionable background and tends to lower one's rank, at least temporarily.

These indicators are applied most rigorously to the head of the family, but to a lesser extent the attributes of other adults in the household are also significant. Where there are two generations of adults, those of the older generation are of greater weight. The attributes of males are more important than those of females in determining the over-all rank of the family.

The *criteria* and the *indicators* not only are different from each other, but both need to be kept distinct from attributes and behavior that are merely *associated with* a category with a high degree of frequency. Goodenough made this point, emphasizing that the way one customarily behaves toward a brother, for example, is associated with the category "brother" but does not define who is and who is not a brother (1956:216). Similarly, the A-2 *signori* are often characterized as miserly and personally unkempt, but these qualities are not criteria for defining the category nor are they indicators of any criteria.

Distinguishing between *criteria* and *indicators* helps to clarify some of the disagreements between informants in assigning particular persons to the categories. There seems to be little discrepancy between informants when their various judgments are viewed in terms of the hypothesized categories and the criteria that define them. However, the informants clearly gave varying degrees of importance to the different indicators in deciding whether or not the criteria had been met. For instance, both for Rinaldo and for Gianni the contrast between A-1 and A-2 could be understood in terms of "legitimate" *vs.* "false" influence. However, Rinaldo considered a distinguished family name a much more important basis for establishing "legitimacy" than did Gianni, who on the other hand gave a greater emphasis to distinctions between professions. Moreover, inconsistency in assignments arose from the fact that the same informant would shift his emphasis on different indicators from one pair of cards to another. However, if the indicators are regarded not as criteria in themselves but as different kinds of significant evidence for judging whether the criteria are satisfied, these "inconsistencies" can be accounted for.

A task remaining to be accomplished is that of determining the rules for evaluating the indicators as evidence. The ethnographer must be able to tell, given the same information as the Colleverdese informant, whether the criteria are satisfied. In part, this is a matter of weighting the different indicators correctly. However, this cannot be done by setting up numerical scales for each of the indicators and applying a different but constant weight to each of the scales. As was argued with reference to the criteria, the importance of the different indicators varies considerably depending upon the part of the stratification system one is dealing with. An indicator that is crucial in a decision between A-1 and A-2 is irrelevant to C-1/C-2 and vice versa.⁹ Thus, a first problem is the complexity of the rules for combining and weighting indicators.

A second problem arises from the fact that informants vary in the way in which they use the indicators (for example, the difference between Rinaldo and Gianni in contrasting A-1/A-2). These individual variations seem to be related to age, position in the stratification system, and personal orientation, among other things.

Determining whether there are discrete strata or a continuum of ranked positions is a potentially knotty problem in describing systems of social hierarchy. In the present case, the informants clearly assumed that persons could be arranged into groups on the basis of negligible differences in prestige within a group. While there are high-low variations within any category, in Colleverdese culture it is not only possible but a matter of practical necessity to ignore some differences and lump the variants into a single stratum. More important, if one concentrates on the criteria—the conceptual contrasts that demarcate categories—the system emerges as one composed of discrete strata. At the same time, there often is no sharp distinction between the actual persons assigned to adjacent categories, and a number of people apparently fit into two. There is no contradiction between these two statements. For instance, the distinction “the legitimate association with village or with countryside” is a contrast that makes categories AB and C mutually exclusive. Yet, Antonio Rellini, a mechanic who had left his farm after World War II to move into the village, is “legitimately associated” in some ways with the village and in some ways with the countryside, and informants’ perceptions of where he belongs vary. Since the primary concern here is with the contrasts inherent in the system, such disagreements about the placement of specific persons and the consequent cutting-point inconsistencies need not obscure the existence of discrete strata.

The problem of informant discrepancy has been raised at several points. Even with the few informants used, consensus was lacking on many issues. There are a number of different sources of such disagreement. A fairly simple matter is the existence of mobility within the system. A family in the process of changing its position will be evaluated differently by various informants. My assumption remains that the stratification code consists of definite categories; the mobile individual or family, then, is regarded as temporarily between adjacent categories.

Another source of discrepancy lies in the attributes of the informants themselves, particularly the different vantage points from which informant who occupy different levels view the system. It is a fact of complex social life that one makes finer discriminations in areas closer to one’s own position, while cruder discriminations suffice for more distant areas. Thus, to Gianni (a member of A-2) all of category C were *contadini* alike, while to Alberto (a member of B) there was a small but significant distinction to be made within B. The point is not to decide which person’s view is closer to the “real” code, but to allow the different views to supplement each other in order to define the total code more completely. It is necessary to compare informants not only for points of agreement but for regularities in their disagreement, for the discrepancies between informants are not necessarily somebody’s “errors” but

may be complementary evidence. The total system can be described only by juxtaposing discriminations from informants of different categories, not by averaging out the differences among them. This also dictates the selection of a "representative" sample of informants in working toward a definitive description of any system. The problem is to ensure covering the whole system by including persons who know different parts of it. It is not necessary or even desirable to restrict one's choice of informants to persons who know almost everyone in the community, for each informant is useful to the extent that he can reveal in detail the discriminations of some part of the total system.

The most complex problem of discrepancy derives from the possibility that informants differ not only in making fewer or more categorical distinctions, or in their weighing of indicators or their matching up of persons with indicators; they also differ as to the categories themselves. Alternative sets of conceptual categories and criteria undoubtedly coexist, all yielding minimally appropriate judgments and responses. This is more evident in a terminologically vague domain of culture such as "prestige" than in kinship, for example, and more evident in a complex society than in a homogeneous one, but it occurs in every domain and in every culture. The cognitive maps of kinship terminology may vary from one person to another, yet permit all to use the terms appropriately and behave in a culturally acceptable way. Since behavior need only be minimally appropriate, a code needs to be "shared" only insofar as necessary for it to be workable. In other words, for a complete description (which is not, of course, attempted here) it is necessary to talk not about *the* cultural code, but about many codes—variations that correspond to different subcultural groups and variations that are idiosyncratic.

The categories, criteria, and indicators of Colleverde prestige stratification are presented as a hypothesized model of the system. But how can its validity be evaluated? Perhaps the only way to support the preferability of this model over alternative formulations is by examining the extent to which it can account for other data relevant to prestige. Overheard and unsolicited statements should reveal the same contrasts as those of the hypothesis; for example, the *paese/campagna* contrast was revealed in hundreds of comments from persons of all categories. Observed behavior should be foreseeable: in the course of the ethnographic work it was possible for me to test different parts of the hypothesized code by trying to predict judgments about particular persons and then checking these predictions against actual demonstrations of deference behavior. Furthermore, the model should make possible verifiable predictions about the outcome of new situations. In addition to analyzing such situations as they arise, the ethnographer can ask hypothetical questions. Questions in the form of "If there were one person who was _____ and another person who was _____, who would owe *rispetto* to whom?" were found useful in testing the present model.

The test of the utility of any model is in the data it can make intelligible that another model cannot. The results presented here may be compared with the formulation achieved in Colleverde by observation and interviewing before

the sorting method was devised. My first summary of the Colleverde stratification system recognized two large classes that were separated interactionally, with several levels in each. Two minor interactional gaps were also guessed at. At first, the characterization was occupational. However, there were many known cases in which persons of the same occupation were actually at much different levels of prestige. It was essential that other distinctions be introduced, such as behavioral standards to separate different village artisans, and residence to differentiate among the unskilled laborers. The revised summary was as follows:

Landowners (those who live off their land income)
Professionals
White-collar workers and merchants

Village artisans, "civilized"

Village artisans, "noncivilized"
Unskilled nonagricultural laborers, village residents
Unskilled nonagricultural laborers, country residents

Peasant proprietors and farm tenants
Agricultural wage laborers
<i>Mezzadria</i> peasants
Drifters

A number of problems still remained. For instance, the prestige level of different landowners varied a great deal, and the variation was not necessarily related to the amount of land owned; a few, living modestly on the income of two farms, were somewhat higher than the professionals, while others, with six or seven farms, were definitely lower. Another question was why unskilled laborers were generally at a higher level than the peasant proprietors, although the latter were often more prosperous. Similarly, it was not clear why many of the agricultural wage laborers rated higher than the *mezzadri*, whose economic position was frequently better.¹⁰ Above all, many persons still did not "fit" into the level of their own occupation. These exceptions could be placed more correctly by taking into account behavior, schooling, family name, and so on; however, there was no consistent way of determining which factors ought to be counted in which cases.

The sorting method affords a number of advantages in constructing a more adequate description. It provides a nonintuitive way of marking off categories and locating significant gaps of differing degrees. It permits the determination of the criteria that are relevant, allowing also for the fact that these are not the same at all levels of the system. Thus, occupation is retained as a powerful discriminating factor, but only in the context of other criteria and only at certain points in the system.

It has not, of course, been proved that the hypothesized model is the same as that in the minds of the culture-bearers. The categories, codes, or cognitive maps of the people ("psychological reality," as Wallace would have it) can

perhaps never be perfectly reproduced. Nevertheless, the ethnographer can eliminate alternative models in order to make his own constructs approach more closely those of his informants.

SOME OTHER APPROACHES TO PRESTIGE STRATIFICATION

Since stratification methodology has a considerable history in the sociological study of small communities, it may be appropriate to indicate how my approach is similar to or different from other procedures that have commonly been employed. A number of these were considered for use in Colleverde, but they were felt to be inadequate to the purpose of discovering the code—the principles for assigning prestige. It goes without saying that they may be useful for other purposes.¹¹

The most frequent way of describing an unfamiliar stratification system is to take as an index to social rank occupation (in the case of agriculturalists, the relation to the land) or some arithmetical combination of several factors (occupation, income, education, ethnic identity, house type, dwelling area, etc.). Although this device is fairly simple and generally provides an approximation of the prestige hierarchy, the problem is that one must first establish the relevancy of the different factors to the system to which they are supposed to be indices. Are they, in fact, significant criteria of prestige in that system, and how and to what extent do the various criteria enter in? After criteria are determined for one cultural context, before they can be applied elsewhere their appropriateness there must be established independently.

Approaches involving natural-history observation sometimes introduce criteria of association or acceptance, on the assumption that social intimacy is expressive of social equality.¹² However, this assumption is questionable for many social milieus, for, as in Colleverde, interranks intimacy may be extensive. The relationship between prestige rank and intimacy (whether expressed in formal associations, cliques, or marriage) is a problem that ought to be explored. To do this, patterns of association must be determined separately from deference patterns; one variable cannot be used as an index of the other.

Occasionally, attitudes and behaviors are used as criteria of prestige rank, on the assumption that they are "class-associated" or on the basis of their having been found to be associated with prestige in other cultural contexts. Again, the basic task is to determine the criteria that are actually significant in the system. Only then is it possible to look for correlations of rank with attitudes or behaviors.

The same objections may be made about the use of data on economic activity, land tenure, or material possessions. An example of a study that makes considerable use of such information is the work of Moss and Cappannari in a South Italian village (1962). They find government statistics on the labor force to be an "approximation" of the social-class system of the community (1962:297). In their summary of the system they place persons according to data on whether they are "landed" or "land-renting" (1962:299). They use

household utilities, such as latrines and bathtubs, as a "basis for determining status" (1962:289). However, they do not demonstrate whether, how, or to what extent occupation, land-holding, and material goods are in fact significant features of the system.¹³ Moreover, since they use these economic data to arrive at their picture of the system, they cannot at the same time legitimately *compare* them with the "pattern of stratification," as they attempt to do. Economic position and material belongings, like associational and behavioral patterns, are factors that ought to be correlated with a prestige system whose principles are independently determined.

The method most often employed in the more elaborate studies of class in small communities is some form of the Matched Agreement procedure developed by Warner (1949) and revised by Hollingshead (1949) and others.¹⁴ The first step is a series of free interviews, in which informants are asked for their views of the local stratification scheme—the number of strata, labels for each, and the names of specific families in each. The aim is to extract the one description on which there is the greatest informant consensus and (in Hollingshead's version) to obtain a control list of families about whose placement there is essential agreement. What is sought from the informant is a picture of the entire system; in fact, an informant is considered valuable to the extent that he can make explicit his view of the system as a whole. Typically, the informant thinks of the criteria he is going to use before, and independently of, judging particular persons.

In contrast, my approach does not require the informant to have an over-all picture, nor do I look, directly, at how he perceives the stratification system. I ask for samples of his own behavior within the system; that is, I ask him to make judgments about specific persons, from which are eventually extracted the rules and criteria of evaluation in the system. The over-all stratification picture of the informant emerges—usually to him as well as to the ethnographer—only after a large number of separate judgments have been made.¹⁵

The subsequent steps of the Matched Agreement technique are concerned with rating the members of the community. Hollingshead's method does this by asking a number of judges to sort the control-list families into unspecified groups, keeping in mind particular criteria (those elicited in the earlier free interviews), and then to match up all other families of their acquaintance. My method differs from this in several important ways. My aim is not to place persons "correctly" in each of the different strata, but to learn the principles by which persons are ranked. I use sorting of cards not to facilitate placement, but to elicit qualitative evaluations as the informants make judgments. I do not attempt to control the judges' sortings by reminding them of the appropriate criteria, but rather I use sorting to discover the criteria actually attended to in the process of judging. My concern is not with consensus about placements but with consensus (or lack of it) about the rules of making those placements.

The method I have used is not primarily concerned with devising a way of classifying people into distinct and undoubted classes. Rather, it aims for a statement of the semantic features of a stratification system. An accurate

and complete statement would eventually produce an adequate placement of persons in the various ranks of their system, for the ethnographer would then be able to anticipate the appropriate response in all situations involving prestige, including the "correct" judgment of any known, newly encountered, or hypothetical person. To the anthropologist who sees his task as one of deciphering the cultural code, there can be little advantage in achieving a description of a stratification system that assigns persons to categories without a clear understanding of the criteria defining those categories and the rules of assignment to them.

CONCLUSION

The approach described here is offered as a point of view that was helpful in one field situation, rather than as a fully developed method for studying prestige stratification. Nevertheless, it may prove useful in other stratified societies; far from being limited to particular kinds of stratification systems, it provides a strategy for revealing the significant dimensions of "unknown" systems.

As it has been developed thus far, the method is applicable only to communities, particularly small communities. However, with some modification (such as a greater use of selected highly visible persons and hypothetical persons in the sorting) and by juxtaposing data from informants occupying different positions instead of working toward the whole system with each informant, it could readily be extended to larger communities as well. Moreover, by further extension of such procedures, it should be possible, theoretically, to outline the stratification system of a total complex society—which cannot, of course, be revealed simply by extrapolation from the community. In practice this would be unwieldy, and the study of total stratification systems will necessarily continue to use objective indices like occupational scales. In any case, it should be recognized that such indices do not substitute for statements of the cultural rules of hierarchical differentiation.

It has not been my intent to contribute to the discussion on what social stratification "is," wherever it exists. I began with a particular system and attempted to draw up the rules of that system in its own terms, regardless of theories of what constitutes or what causes stratification elsewhere. This is not, of course, to deny the importance of cross-cultural comparison. However, if cross-cultural study is to lead to productive theories of stratification "in general," these comparisons can only come after each system has been worked out inductively, for it is the principles of the separate systems that must be compared rather than any superficial similarities or differences in pigeonholes.

NOTES

¹ The field work on which this paper is based was supported by a predoctoral fellowship (MF-11,068) and grant (M-3720) from the National Institute of Mental Health, United States Public Health Service. A fuller description of the community studied is given in Silverman (1963). I am indebted to my colleagues Hortense Powdermaker and Ernestine Friedl for their useful comments on an earlier version of this paper.

² This point has often been made in just criticism of the work of Lloyd Warner.

³ The four informants were all of different stratification ranks, being assigned eventually to A-1, A-2, B, and C-1, respectively.

⁴ Frake has eloquently shown (1964b) that the discovery of the right questions is a major key to the cultural code, the result rather than the antecedent of successful ethnographic description. Thus, setting up a sorting method like the one discussed here probably could not be achieved in the early phases of field work.

⁵ Although stating the difference between categories in terms of a single underlying contrast is the simplest construct—and therefore the most desirable in the absence of discrepant data—there is no necessary reason why this should be so. It is possible that in other systems, or in a more accurate description of this one, not all specific contrasts may be reducible to a single one. Nor is contrast the only significant way in which distinctions may be made; for instance, “degree of” might be more revealing in some instances.

⁶ The analysis of *rispetto* in Colleverde may be contrasted with Goodenough's recent attempt to state the rules for “setting oneself above another” in Truk (1965). He lists six duties that are involved in deference, and he places different relationships on a seven-point scale according to the particular combination of duties owed. His concern is to indicate all of the specific behaviors involved in showing deference, behaviors that vary separately from each other. In Colleverde, the duties making up *rispetto* generally (although not entirely) vary together. The complexity of its deference patterns (and therefore the emphasis of the present analysis) lies in the many factors that differentiate persons who owe and are owed these duties. In Truk this differentiation could be stated in terms of kinship statuses.

⁷ This fact underlines the danger of defining a stratification system in terms of social intimacy, particularly in small communities where the number of contacts is limited and where people may often be obliged to look beyond their own and even adjacent ranks for the most personally compatible associates.

⁸ This is the rationale underlying Warner's Index of Status Characteristics.

⁹ An example of the first would be the indicator “number of years of formal schooling.” In the second instance, “agricultural or nonagricultural work” would be crucial to C-1/C-2 but irrelevant to the A-1/A-2 contrast.

¹⁰ This finding also seemed to require explanation in view of the fact that in studies of Southern Italy, agricultural wage laborers (*braccianti*) are generally described as lower in prestige than peasants with a stable, continuing relation to the land they work (Banfield 1958:69; Lopreato 1961:591-592).

¹¹ This discussion is limited to a few of the methods that (1) are primarily concerned with the dimension of “prestige,” and (2) attempt to discover inductively the rules of systems assumed to be “unknown.”

¹² For example, Turney-High's study of social class in a Walloon village relies heavily upon observations of interactional patterns. Unfortunately, he merges two quite different dimensions of interaction—deference and intimacy (1953:82).

¹³ Exactly how Moss and Cappannari arrive at their statement of the stratification system remains unclear, although they list a variety of sources of data (1962:288-289). Apparently, their summary is a composite from clues gathered from a judges panel, “observation” (of what?), official data, and impressions of “what is considered” in the popular view (that is, what they think “the people” think). They state that “focused interviews” provided the “basic values related to social stratification” (1962:289), but it is impossible to judge how and to what extent these values entered into their summary. The panel of judges was asked to rank-order the townspeople using a number of specific criteria, but we are not told how these criteria were arrived at and whether they are those of the townspeople or of the ethnographers.

¹⁴ See, for example, Lopreato's study of stratification in a Calabrian community (1961).

¹⁵ Another fundamental difference between the Warner approach and mine lies in what the informants refer to in giving their judgments. Warner's informants give a many-dimensional evaluation of status, including cliques (who “accepts” whom), what people do and how they think, institutional memberships, personal characteristics of individuals, and prestige (respect and defer-

ence). The last variable, which in Warner's procedure becomes inextricably combined with the other dimensions, is what I attempt to concentrate upon.

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